



U.S. Department of Justice

Ronald C. Machen Jr.
*United States Attorney for the
District of Columbia*

*Judiciary Center
555 Fourth Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530*

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For Information Contact:

Public Affairs

(202) 514-6933

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Former Head of the U.S. Office of Special Counsel Pleads Guilty to Criminal Contempt of Congress

Washington, D.C. - The former head of the United States Office of Special Counsel ("OSC"), Scott J. Bloch, pled guilty today to Criminal Contempt of Congress for willfully and unlawfully withholding pertinent information from a House committee investigating his decision to have several government computers wiped, announced U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr., Office of Personnel Management ("OPM") Inspector General Patrick McFarland, and Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI") Assistant Director in Charge Shawn Henry.

The plea was entered before U.S. Magistrate Judge Deborah A. Robinson, in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, who scheduled sentencing for July 20, 2010. Bloch faces a maximum sentence of one-year in jail and a fine of \$100,000. Bloch's likely sentencing range is 0 to 6 months in jail under the Federal Sentencing Guidelines.

The OSC is an independent federal agency charged with safeguarding the merit-based employment system by protecting federal employees and applicants from prohibited personnel practices, with an emphasis on protecting federal whistleblowers. Bloch, a presidential appointee whose title was Special Counsel, headed the OSC from 2004 through 2008.

According to the Statement of Offense, on March 4, 2008, Bloch submitted to a transcribed interview with staff members of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform ("House Oversight Committee"), which was investigating, among other things, whether and why Bloch: (i) directed the deletion of emails or files on any of Bloch's OSC-issued computers in December of 2006 by using the computer repair service Geeks On Call; (ii) directed that Geeks On Call delete emails or files contained on the computers of two of his OSC aides; and (iii) directed that any such deletion of computer files be done by use of a "seven-level wipe" process. This duly empowered Congressional inquiry came after various media reports that Bloch had directed the deletion of files on several OSC-issued computers by enlisting Geeks On Call to perform a "seven-level wipe" on them.

The Statement of Offense describes five separate exchanges during Bloch's March 4, 2008 interview with staff members of the House Oversight Committee during which Bloch unlawfully and willfully withheld pertinent information from the Committee. Bloch admitted in Court today that he refused and failed to state fully and completely the nature and extent of his instructions that Geeks On Call perform "seven-level wipes" on his OSC computers as well as the two OSC-issued computers of two non-career OSC staff members in December of 2006.

In announcing today's guilty plea, U.S. Attorney Machen, OPM Inspector General McFarland, and FBI Assistant Director in Charge Henry praised the outstanding work of the investigative agents involved in this matter, especially Special Agent Marc R. Diehl and Andrew Smallman of the FBI, as well as Jill P. Maroney, Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Investigations, and J. David Cope, Assistant Inspector General for Legal Affairs of OPM. They also acknowledged the hard work of paralegal specialists Diane Hayes and Mary Treanor, legal assistant Jamasee Lucas, former legal assistant April Peeler, Supervisory IT Specialist, Joe Calvarese, Assistant U.S. Attorneys Laurel Loomis Rimon, Dan Butler, James Mitzelfeld, and Glenn S. Leon, who is prosecuting the case.

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